THE VALUE OF THE CORRECTED SUMMARY AS COMPARED WITH THE RE-READING OF THE SAME ARTICLE

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Much has been said and written by those working in the field of education relative to the value of outlining and summarizing as methods of study. However, since there seems to be a scarcity of scientific data on the subject, an attempt was made to determine experimentally the value of one kind of summarizing. The following is a synopsis of this experiment.

Briefly stated the problem is: What is the value of making a corrected summary-outline of an article as compared with the re-reading of the same article for the same length of time? The procedure in making a corrected summary-outline entails the following steps: (1) The article is read as a whole. (2) A brief summary-outline is written from memory. (3) The article is glanced over with a view to discovering what points of importance were forgotten or overlooked in the summary-outline. (4) The summary-outline is corrected by the adding of points omitted or by changing statements in the original summary-outline.

METHOD OF EXPERIMENTATION

1. *Selection of material.*—After considerable preliminary experimenting, an eight-page article on "What We Should Know about Tuberculosis" was selected as being suitable for the purposes of this study. This article was adapted from a pamphlet issued by the New York State Department of Health. It was found to be not too difficult for the grades in which this study was conducted, and it did not contain material that was covered in the usual class work.

2. *Division of the class.*—In order to measure the efficiency of the corrected summary as a method of studying, it was necessary

to divide the pupils taking part in this experiment into two groups of practically equal comprehension ability in silent reading. This was done by having the teachers of the various classes rank their students according to their ability to comprehend what they read. The pupil who ranked 1 was placed in the first group, 2 and 3 in the second group, 4 and 5 in the first, etc.

The ranking of the teachers was compared with the pupils' ranks according to their intelligence quotients and the following Spearman's correlations found: Grade V, .62; Grade VI, .71; Grade VII, .68; Grade VIII, .65; and Grade IX, .72.

3. *Method of measuring comprehension.*—Two rigorous tests were used to measure the comprehension. The first was a question-and-answer test covering the material read and involving points of major and minor importance. The second was a recognition test. Four answers were suggested for each question, only one of which was correct, and the pupils were asked to underline the correct answer. This type of test was used in conjunction with the former because of the possibility of children being able to *recognize* an answer they could not *recall*, and also because of the possibility of finer differences being measured.

4. *Method of scoring.*—One point was given for each correct answer. The questions were all worded in such a way as to admit of but one correct answer. All the papers were graded by the writer and a graduate student who had worked through the material and helped in the administration of the experiment.

5. *Administration of the experiment.*—This experiment was conducted in Grades V–IX inclusive of the Elementary and Junior High Schools of the State University of Iowa. The summarizing group was designated Group A and the re-reading group, Group B. Both groups worked at the same time but in different rooms.

The instructions to Group A were as follows:

1. In the pamphlet is an article on tuberculosis. Read it through *once* as rapidly and carefully as you can, asking yourself as you read, "What is it all about and what are the main points in it that I should know and remember?"

2. Turn the article face downward and on the paper provided make a summary of what you have just read. That is, write down all the main points or ideas that you think this article contains. At the same time try to organize the main points under headings.

3. Take up the article on tuberculosis and again look it over carefully and as you read write down the main points omitted or correct those already written if they are wrong.

In order that the pupils in Group A might know exactly the method of procedure in the experiment, ten minutes were spent in class in summarizing three short paragraphs just as the whole article was to be summarized. In this preliminary, the experimenter emphasized the necessity of speed and brevity. Thirty minutes were then allowed for reading and summarizing, and at the end of that time the two tests were given.

TABLE I*

A COMPARISON OF THE TOTAL SCORES MADE BY THE SUMMARIZING GROUPS (A) AND THE RE-READING GROUPS (B) IN THE FIVE DIFFERENT GRADES ON THE SAME READING MATERIAL

	V	VI	VII	VIII	IX
Group B	167	145	177	247	227
Group A	160	128	147	216	198
Difference	7	17	30	31	29
Group B excels by (per cent)	4.4	13.3	20.4	14.3	14.6

*This table is read thus: Group B in Grade V made an aggregate score of 167 while Group A made an aggregate score of 160; Group B in Grade VI made an aggregate score of 145 while Group A made an aggregate score of 128, etc.

The method of procedure with Group B was as follows: The class was given the article on tuberculosis and asked to read it as many times as possible in the thirty-minute period. At the end of that time, Group B was subjected to the same two tests as Group A.

In Table I a summary of the results is presented. An examination of this table shows that in every grade the group that merely re-read the article retained more than the group that read and summarized.

CONCLUSIONS

Since this experiment was conducted in only one school and since only one type of reading material was used, too much emphasis should not be placed on the results. However, the results of the experiment would seem to indicate that with such summarizing

ability as these students possessed at the time of the experiment, the following is true:

1. The re-reading groups (B) show a consistent superiority, ranging from 4.4 per cent to 20.4 per cent.

2. Since the re-reading group excels in each grade tested, the relative value of a corrected summary as a method of study is seriously questioned.

3. An analysis of the corrected summaries of the majority of the pupils indicates that much of the thirty minutes was spent in indiscriminate note-taking.

4. It is possible that the advantage of the re-reading groups lay in the fact that these pupils used the entire period re-reading the article in its *entirety*, and possibly mentally summarizing it.

5. The average score made by Grade V was less than one-fifth of the total possible score; in Grade IX the average was less than one-third of the possible score. These data would seem to indicate the need of a more thorough and rigorous testing for comprehension of lesson assignments.